



July 13, 2014

The use of mosques in the Gaza Strip for military purposes by Hamas and other terrorist organizations: the case of the Al-Farouq Mosque



The Al-Farouq Mosque in the Nuseirat refugee camp after being attacked on July 12, 2014, by the Israel Air Force. According to Israeli military sources, the mosque was used for storing rockets and weapons and as a compound for Hamas operations. The Arabic graffiti written on the wall reads “We will stand firm, Netanyahu. The Al-Farouq Mosque, July 12, 2014” (Filastin al-'Aan, July 12, 2014).

Attack on the Al-Farouq Mosque

1. During Israeli air strikes in Operation Protective Edge, the **Al-Farouq Mosque in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the middle of the Gaza Strip was attacked on July 12, 2014**. Israeli media, relying on military sources, reported that **the mosque was used as a compound for Hamas operations and for storing rockets and weapons** (Israel Radio 2, Walla News, July 12, 2014).
2. **Dr. Hassan al-Difi**, deputy minister of religious endowments in the Gaza Strip, strongly condemned what he called “attacking mosques in Gaza,” which “reveals the true face of the barbaric Israeli occupation ...” (Palestine Info, July 12, 2014). **Sheikh Yousef al-Dais**, minister of endowments in the national consensus government in Ramallah, called the attacks on the Al-Farouq Mosque and other mosques in Gaza “war crimes” of Israel. He added that Israel is engaging in “cultural-religious

persecution of the Palestinian people in general and the residents of the Gaza Strip in particular” (Wafa News Agency, July 13, 2013).

Military uses of the Al-Farouq Mosque and other mosques

3. Military use of the Al-Farouq Mosque by Hamas is not an exception. Hamas and other terrorist organizations **systematically use many mosques in the Gaza Strip for military and political purposes.** Mosques in the Gaza Strip **are used not only for worship but also for diverse military and political purposes, such as** recruiting operatives for terrorist activity, storing weapons, meeting places for terrorist operatives, points of departure for terrorist attacks, training sites, places for firing rockets and mortar bombs and centers for political and ideological activity.

4. Military use of mosques is rooted in the perception of senior Sunni and Shiite clerics, including Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Hamas’s main religious role model¹, **that the use of mosques for military purposes as part of jihad (holy war) is legitimate.** This perception is based on Islamic tradition (hadith) that states that the Prophet Muhammad himself used a mosque for military and political purposes, in addition to the classic function of the mosque as house of worship for the faithful².

5. Photos uploaded to **the Facebook page of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque** indicate that **the mosque was used by Hamas and was frequented by operatives of the Hamas military wing.** Here are some examples:

¹ **Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi** asserted at the time that mosques may be used for political, social, cultural and religious purposes, including on issues related to jihad. He noted that in the days of the Prophet Muhammad, the mosque was the center of activities for the entire Muslim society. The mosque was not only a place to worship Allah, but also a place of study, a gathering place for consultation, a place for people to get to know one another and the like. According to him, in the days of the Prophet Muhammad, delegations would travel from the Arabian Peninsula to meet with the Prophet at the mosque. In those days, Friday sermons were delivered at mosques, and instructions from the Prophet were given to his followers on various topics, including religious, social and political matters. In Al-Qaradawi’s opinion, **since the inception of Islam, the mosque has played an important role in encouraging Muslims to embark on jihad and in the management of the "resistance against the enemies of the [Muslim] community, from among invaders who seek to govern it [i.e., the Muslim community]."** Al-Qaradawi noted that **mosques play an important role in any jihad.** Moreover, in his opinion, **it is permissible to preach in a mosque against a government that does not comply with Sharia** (Islamic religious law), and mosques must not become a tool in the hands of the various regimes that want to utilize them to control the Muslim population http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=3598&version=1&template_id=230&parent_id=17).

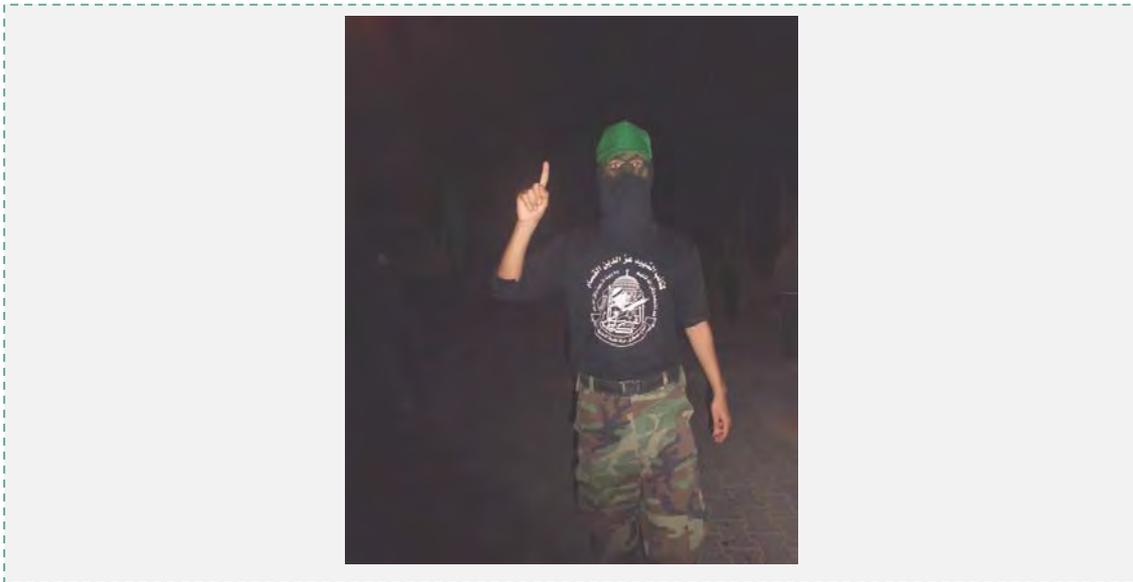
² For an analysis of military use of mosques by terrorist organizations, see the ITIC Information Bulletin of March 2, 2009: "The use of mosques for military and political purposes by Hamas and other terrorist organizations and Islamic groups. This use, which found expression in Operation Cast Lead, is widespread in the Arab and Muslim world. According to international laws of war, mosques used for military purposes lose the special protection afforded to them and may become legitimate targets for attack" (www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/18308).



Death notice, published on the Facebook page, about the deaths of two Hamas military operatives who were part of the Hamas arms manufacturing system. The two were members of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque in Nuseirat and were killed on April 16, 2014, during what was called a “jihad mission” i.e., a Hamas military mission (Facebook page of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque, July 11, 2014)



Boys watching World Cup games at the Al-Farouq Mosque. The word "Hamas" appears on the door (to the right of the TV set) (Facebook page of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque, July 11, 2014)



Nighttime military parade of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, which began near the Al-Farouq Mosque (Facebook page of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque, June 14, 2014)



Banner marking the anniversary of the death of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi (Facebook page of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque, April 17, 2014)



Photo published to mark the anniversary of the death of Ibrahim Abu al-Nar³, a Hamas military operative and member of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque (Facebook page of the congregation of the Al-Farouq Mosque, June 15, 2014)

Military training in mosques for children and teenagers

6. During the **summer camps** held by Hamas in the summer of 2014, children and teenagers underwent semi-military training at schools and mosques.

³ Hamas military operative from Nuseirat. He joined the ranks of the Hamas military wing in 2002. He initially manufactured hand grenades, IEDs and mortars. Subsequently, he asked for a transfer to military activity at the combat level. He was killed on June 15, 2007, during exchanges of fire with national security operatives in Nuseirat (<http://www.nnw1.net/> website, September 2, 2008).



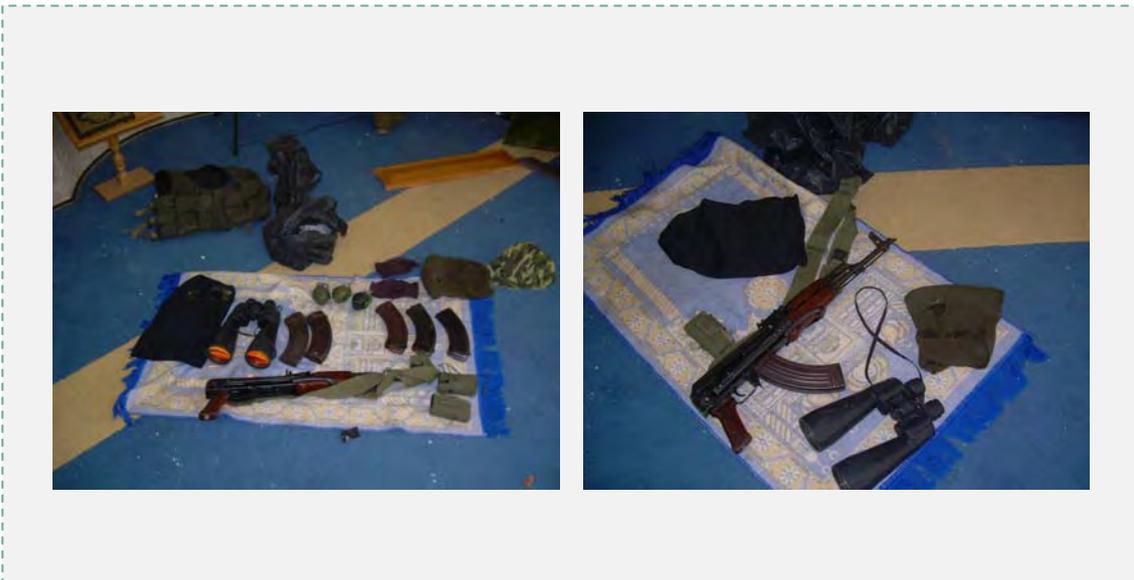
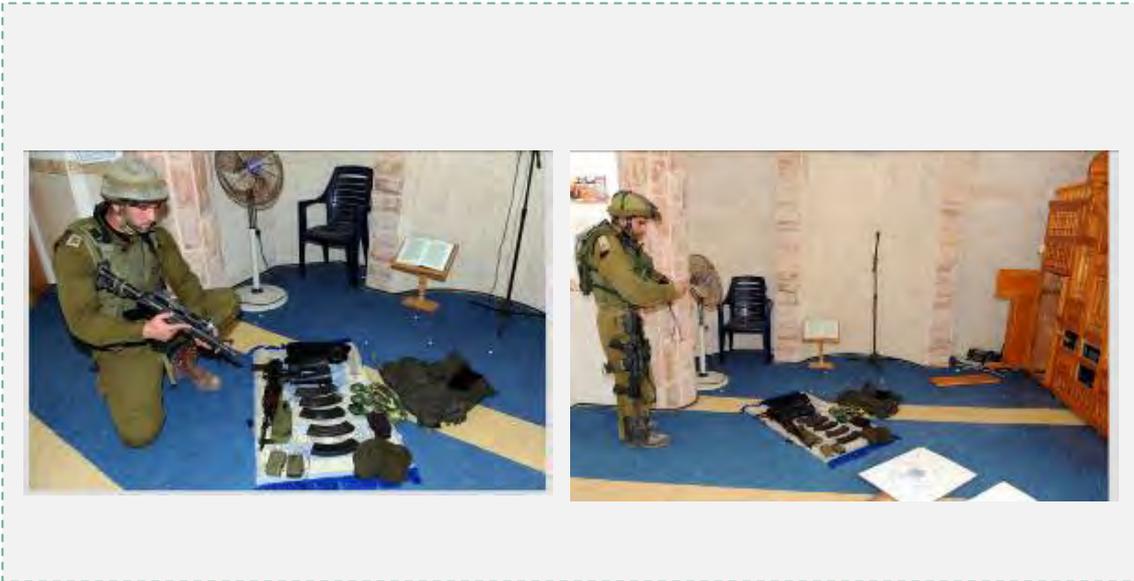
Children and teenagers undergoing weapons training at mosques during 2014 summer camps (Facebook pages of the Hamas summer camps, June 11 and 22, 2014)

Military use of mosques in the Gaza Strip exposed during Operation Cast Lead

7. During Operation Cast Lead (December 2008 - January 2009), Hamas and other terrorist organizations made extensive use of mosques for military-terrorist purposes. During the operation, evidence of a variety of uses of mosques was revealed:

A. **Storing arms, ammunition and military equipment.** The items found in mosques included rockets, IEDs, Kalashnikov rifles, magazines and even an anti-aircraft gun. Videos of the Israel Air Force strikes during the operation

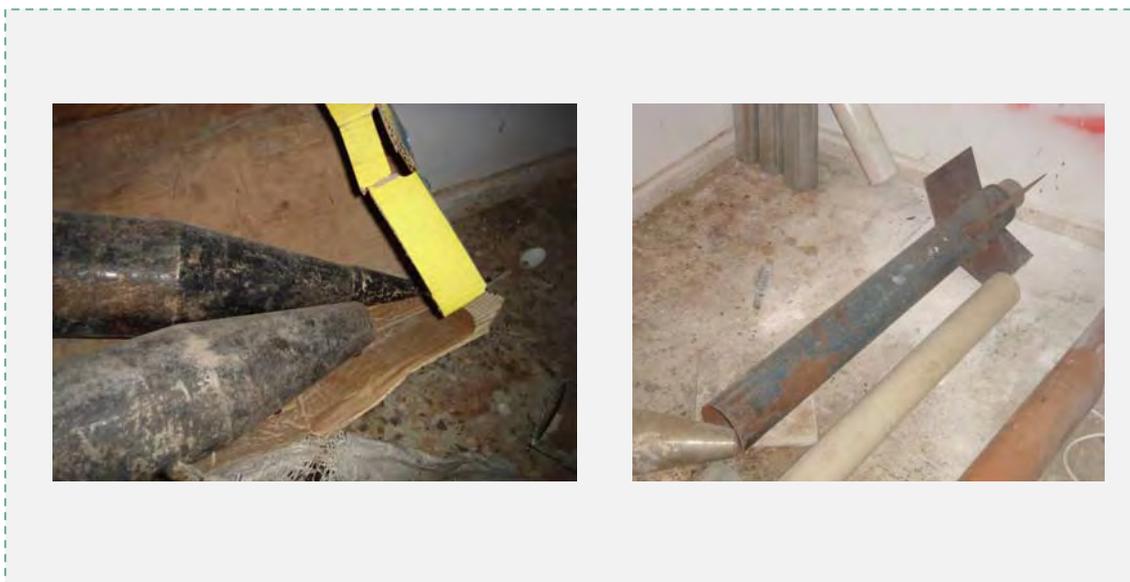
show powerful secondary explosions after attacks on mosques, indicating the large quantity of explosives and weapons stored there. Based on the terrorist organizations' perception of mosque compounds as sites of combat, IEDs were placed near them, military positions were set up and tunnels were dug near them.



Arms, ammunition and military equipment found during Operation Cast Lead in the mosque in Al-Atatra, in the northern Gaza Strip (January 14, 2009; IDF Spokesman, January 15, 2009).



**Weapons uncovered by the IDF in mosques in the Gaza Strip during Operation Cast Lead:
Left: anti-aircraft gun found in a mosque in Jebaliya. Right: Shawaz type IEDs seized in the
mosque in Al-Atatra.**



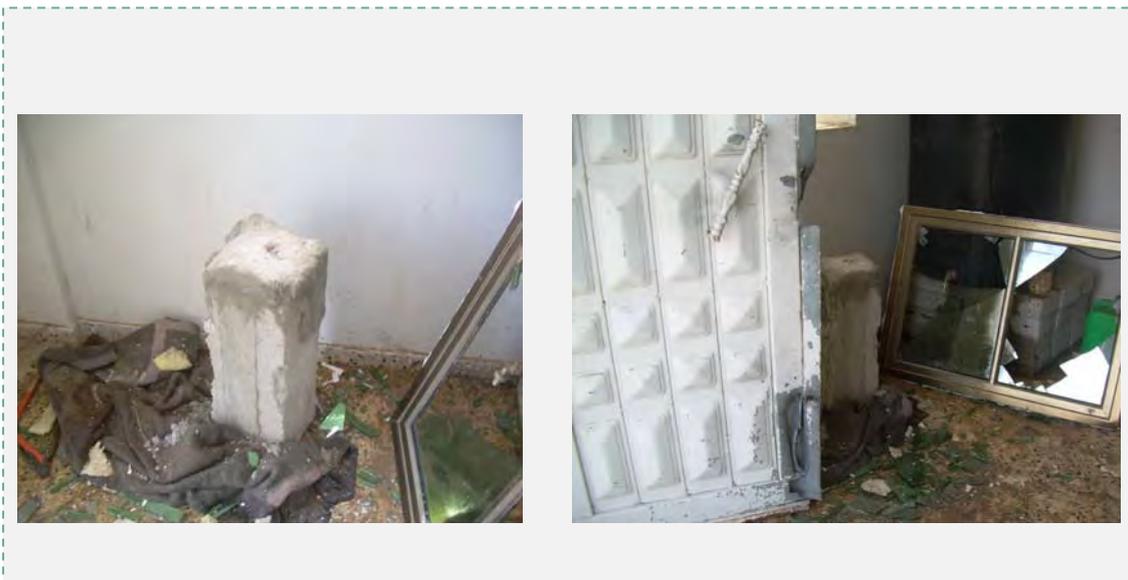
Rockets and mortar shells found during searches conducted by the IDF in a mosque in the Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City during Operation Cast Lead (January 11, 2009)



Store of rockets, seized by the IDF in a mosque in the Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City



Left: A Kalashnikov assault rifle, vest and binoculars were found hidden under the pulpit. Right: The preacher's pulpit (*minbar*) in a mosque in Al-Atatra, in the northern Gaza Strip.



Weapons found in a side room in the mosque in Al-Atatra. Top left: IED disguised as a concrete block. Top right: explosives. Bottom left: IED concealed in a plastic jerrycan. Bottom right and left: fragmentation IEDs concealed in plastic foam.



Palestine Mosque and a nearby IED and launching post

IED found near a mosque that controls a route south of Khan Yunis. The IED is set off from the mosque by means of a cable.

B. Launching rockets and mortar shells at Israel and IDF troops. Israel Air Force videos from Operation Cast Lead and aerial photographs clearly show rockets being launched from the courtyards of mosques and firing posts and IEDs located near mosques.



Rocket launching site near a mosque in the Shati refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip

Rockets being launched from the courtyard of a mosque on January 7, 2009

C. **Teaching military courses at mosques.** Hamas military operative, resident of Al-Atatra in the northern Gaza Strip by the name of **Subhi Majed Attar**, told about the theoretical military training that he received at the **Bilal Ibn Rabah Mosque** in Al-Atatra. As part of the military training, he studied various topics such as firing rockets and RPG missiles.